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STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2010
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: ORDERLY WITH LIGHT TURNOUT

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Douglas M. Griffiths for reasons
1.4(b).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Voting for the second round of parliamentary elections is proceeding smoothly with light turnout as of 1330. Estimates range from 10 to 20 percent participation so far. The CEP has taken to the airwaves to encourage voting, emphasizing better organization at voting centers and minimal wait times. MINUSTAH reports calm throughout the country, except for one incident in the city of Saint Marc in the Artibonite Department. A clash between supporters of the L'Espwa and Artibonite in Action (LAAA) parties has reportedly led to the closing of the main voting center in the city. Embassy officers have observed marked improvement in the organization of voting centers, much more visible security presence throughout the country, and a notably calm atmosphere. The low turnout has generated continued commentary among political observers bemoaning Haitians' low regard for parliament compared to the traditional authority they confer on the president. End Summary.

Turnout

¶2. (U) Media and Embassy observers report turnout as of mid-day in a range between 10 and 20 percent. CEP Director General Jacques Bernard stated on the radio that turnout in the provinces was higher than in Port-au-Prince. Embassy observers based in three departments outside of Port-au-Prince also report that enthusiasm seems to be greater in the countryside than in the cities. The Embassy observer in the North Department reported nearly 75 percent turnout at a voting center in a district outside Cap Haitien where the deputy race is tightly contested, and turnout as low as 5% at voting centers in the city. Embassy officers in Port-au-Prince observed medium-sized lines to vote in one of the larger voting sites serving the Cite Soleil slum at 1030, but only handfuls of voters at sites minutes away.

¶3. (U) CEP President Mathurin has gone on the radio to encourage Haitians to turn out, emphasizing the improvements the CEP has made to make the process easier and the lack of lines at voting centers. Local press coverage is focused on the low turnout and the reasons for it, in some cases casting

blame on the organizers for lack of a publicity campaign or the Haitians for their lack of interest.

¶4. (U) Complaints stem principally from voters who were unofficially added to voting lists and allowed to vote during the first round, but whom elections officials are now turning away. The CEP emphasized between rounds that only those persons already on the voting list for a particular voting center would be allowed to vote and posted the voting lists at voting centers three days in advance of election day. The CEP has publicly restated the position for the media several times today and established a hotline for voters with problems and complaints.

Security

¶5. (C) MINUSTAH's joint operation reported no major security concerns as of 1130 with the exception of Saint Marc. In that city, clashes between rival supporters from President-elect Preval's L'Espwa party and the LAAA party, led by the prime minister's nephew Yuri Latortue, and reputed to have the support of local gangs, reportedly resulted in the destruction of ballots and tally sheets and the indefinite closing of the city's main voting center. Unconfirmed additional reports suggest that disturbances around Saint Marc may affect other voting centers, and MINUSTAH has sent reinforcements. MINUSTAH's political chief lamented to Polcouns that although MINUSTAH had identified the area in advance as the source of potential trouble, their advance deployment failed to prevent the incident.

¶6. (U) Apart from that incident, observers around the country report a calm and peaceful atmosphere. Embassy Observers noted the significantly increased presence of MINUSTAH military, UNPol and HNP personnel moving around the country and stationed in voting centers. Embassy officers at a site serving Cite Soleil observed a Brazilian military contingent directly helping elections officials maintain order in the line to vote. Officers also met with the same joint UNPol/HNP roving patrol at two separate sites. The Canadian UNPol officer in charge stated they had met with no trouble at any of the designated "hot spots" during their rounds. Embassy observers in the field reported that MINUSTAH had concentrated security personnel in areas where tensions reportedly ran high before election day, but that no disruptions had materialized.

Organization

¶7. (U) Organization is visibly improved from the first round. Elections authorities have posted much clearer signage identifying voting bureaus within the voting centers and the corresponding voting lists they serve. Poll workers appeared to be much better trained and prepared at the opening of the polls. Lower turnout has resulted in a far greater ratio of elections workers able to help voters at any given site. Polls generally opened on time opened even where authorities encountered administrative problems.

Comment

¶8. (U) The lack of a sense of "event" for the decisive second parliamentary round underlines the disparity between the importance of the presidency and the parliament in the minds of the Haitian people. A Haitian journalist at the voting center outside Cite Soleil told Emboffs that the Haitian people needed to better understand their constitution, which gives parliament powers as great as the president's. He hoped that this election would be the first step in an education process and that it would produce a parliament that would at least attempt to carry out its constitutional functions.

SANDERSON